

C. H. S.

BANDWAGON

1956, Vol. 2—MARCH-APRIL

25c



CHARLEY (Vensel) BRADY
Superintendent Mills Bros. Circus

Photo by Elwell

— The Circusiana Magazine —

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Founded in 1939

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25c a single copy
\$1.50 a year in U. S. A.

Advertising rates—
\$5.00 Full Page
\$3.50 Half Page
\$2.00 Quarter Page

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lisher.

The Editor Says

EVERYBODY JOIN!

We have a great many friends and subscribers who evidently are interested in the Circus and the history of it, or they would not read the Bandwagon so avidly. Perhaps they do not know how simple it is to become a member of the Circus Historical Society. There are only two requirements for membership, that is, a genuine love of the circus and that you be a collector of some sort of circusiana. If you can qualify on these two simple counts **you are in**. Just write for an application blank and on receipt of that send it back along with your dues. There is no restriction as to age, sex or occupation. You can be in show business or not. A great many of our members are retired troupers. **Don't wait until you retire, join now. Dues are only \$3.60 a year!**

In line with the above words, let me remind the members that dues are payable on May st. Let's increase our membership and have the biggest convention ever. Our President has worked hard to keep us together and she travels great distances to meet you at the Convention. So why not plan now to be in Peru in August.

NEW MEMBERS

Homer L. LeGolyer, No. 596
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422 W. High Ave.,
New Philadelphia, Ohio

With The Greatest Show On Earth

(OLEANDER'S SECOND LETTER)

By John G. Quinius

Written in 1900 by John G. Quinius. Furnished the Band Wagon by his son Herman M. Quinius, CFA of Bette Leonard Tent, Wichita, Kansas. Please note these stories were written and published for childrens entertainment over 55 years ago.

We're at Madison Square Garden, New York City. Here, year after year, we hold our first exhibition, sometimes showing for a month, in order that the vast throng of boys and girls and men and women living in and about this the greatest city of our land may see and admire the great collection of animals and birds, and rare and marvelous curiosities which have been gathered from all parts of the earth.

The Garden itself is one of the greatest show places in the world, and considered by the showmen as the very best place to begin their season and make their "first stand." I myself always like the place very much, as there is always so much which amuses me happening in the crowd. You can see people there from all portions of the globe, ranging in size from the little Eskimo of Alaska to the great, big Zulu of Africa, all laughing, chattering, and out for a happy time; and, judging from appearances they certainly are having a good time. I wish I had a penny for every peanut I see them eat and for every glass of lemonade I see them drink.

Just as we were moving into the Garden, a great poultry show was moving out. I declare! I never saw so many chickens, ducks, geese, and "chicken trimmings" before in my life. Every article that helped to make a chicken's life easier and more complete could be seen. There were incubators, drinking fountains, all kinds of poultry food, and remedies. All the chickens looked their best, and especially happy were those who had been awarded premiums by the judges. I heard one big Cochin rooster telling one of the white Wyandotte hens that there had been about one hundred and fifty varieties of poultry shown during the exhibition, and that never before had so great a number been gathered together at one time.

As I am writing, the herd of elephants, drove of camels, and sacred cattle are moving in to take their places side by side. Each day they are given an hour's walk for exercise. We have with us thirty-five big and little elephants, some coming from Asia, some from Africa. A few of the youngest, having been born in the United States, feel proud in being able to call themselves Americans. Among these latter are the two baby elephants, each about four feet high, and the only pair of twin elephants ever in captivity. The famous white elephant is also a member of the herd and, on account of his color, receives special attention.

Of camels and dromedaries we have a drove of twenty, nearly all of them having been at some time "Ships of the Desert." Some have one hump on their back, others two. All prefer rest rather than labor, and to look at them as they are standing or reclining on their litter of straw, and see their long necks surmounted by their calm and quiet

heads held perfectly upright and quiet, one gets the impression that surely they haven't much on their mind, and that it would take a cyclone to disturb them. They certainly seem contented at all times.

Next in line are the four sacred cattle from India, then come the three Llamas from South America, who never fail to attract attention because of their short legs, heavy bodies, and long necks, and the long coat of hair which covers them nearly all the year. This long hair, as well as that of the Cashmere goats, who stand next to the Llamas, is often used in the weaving of fine fabrics. Next come the little animals that please the children and the grown folks, too, much more than any other attraction we have. I am sure you already know that I refer to the Shetland ponies, about fifty of which are traveling with us. One of the youngest is so small that when he is put into a large washtub one can see only his head and the top of his back. The man who cares for and looks after the ponies tried to make him stand in a tub filled with hay and placed at the side of the pony's mother, but the little rascal didn't like his nest and persisted in jumping out, so showing him that way had to be given up. Generally, all the ponies behave very nicely, but once in a while some of them get stubborn and give their caretakers quite a bit of trouble. At these times they know quite well how to use their teeth and their heels. I heard one of the men say, "Some of these ponies can kick as quick as a mule," and from what I've seen, I'm sure he was right in his statement.

But I hear the blare of trumpets and see the elephants begin their moving to and fro, the camels are rising from their litter of straw, for they well know that the sound of the trumpet heralds the coming of the keepers who will lead them into the great circle to take their place and part in the "Grand Entree." I'll write you again before we leave New York.

OLEANDER, THE HAPPY FAMILY CAT.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY:

Thanks to one and all for choosing me to serve as Vice-President. I appreciate this display of confidence and I will try to repay the trust by faithful service and cooperation with the other officers and the membership. Let's all (officers and members alike) team up to make this an eventful period for our Society.

Before parting, let us remember Bill Green, our retiring Vice-President, who declined to stand for reelection and let us extend a vote of thanks to him for his loyalty and outstanding devotion to the cause.

It will be difficult to follow in the shade of this fine predecessor. But I shall do my best.

Yours Circusly,

BILL KASISKA, C.H.S. 6

The Early Circus In America

By George L. Chindahl

Historian, The Circus Fans Association of America
and Member of The Circus Historical Society

The beginnings of the circus in America date back to 1771, when two English teachers of horsemanship landed here,—John Sharp in Boston and M. F. Faulks in Philadelphia. Sharp performed out-of-doors, doing trick riding on a saddled horse, and afterwards passing his hat to the by-standers. Faulks did much the same kind of feats, but performed in some sort of enclosure in order that he might collect admission fees. Before these simple circuses could develop into something more elaborate, the Revolutionary War diverted men's minds.

Peaceful relations with England having been reestablished, another English riding master, John Bill Ricketts, came to Philadelphia in 1792, erected a round wooden building with a center pole supporting the roof, and began giving riding lessons and exhibitions of trick riding. Pretty soon he added a clown and acrobats, and took his little company to New York, Boston and other eastern cities. But misfortune overtook him. Bankrupted through the burning of his circus buildings in New York and Philadelphia, he left for England on a ship that foundered at sea with all on board.

Little troupes of riders and acrobats had begun to arrive from France, Spain and Italy,—Don Felipe Lailson's circus in 1797, Pepin & Breschard in 1806, Cayetano & Co., about 1810. They exhibited in such buildings as they could find, or put up rough wooden structures. Under such handicaps they could not exhibit regularly or frequently. What little equipment they had was carried in one or two wagons; they slept and ate at hotels, and rode or led their horses from town to town.

The first Americans to organize circus troupes were probably Nathan A. Howes, of Brewster, Putnam County, New York, and Aaron Turner, of Ridgefield, Fairfield County, Connecticut. Howes probably started in the second or third decade of the 1800's; Turner soon thereafter. At first they presented their performances in buildings, when possible, and in out-door enclosures formed by setting up poles in a circular arrangement and stretching a canvas side wall around the ring of poles. Later on they put a canvas roof or top over the enclosure, supported by a center pole; and thus the circus tent or "big top" of today was evolved. Since a tent could be put up and taken down expeditiously, circuses were able to exhibit much more frequently than when wooden buildings had to be erected, and the circus business became more profitable and expanded accordingly. P. T. Barnum, of Bethel, Connecticut, had a brief experience with circus life in 1837-38, but drifted into the museum business. By the time of the Civil War many circuses were traveling over the country roads, all very small in comparison with most of today's shows.

Meanwhile the menagerie business had been developing. Sea captains brought to America wild animals that they had picked up in

foreign ports. These were bought by enterprising showmen, who added them to collections of native American animals, and took them from town to town, exhibiting them in tavern-yards and other convenient places. About the 1830's, the circuses began to rent animals from the menageries, but before long the circuses had absorbed the menageries, and thus the combined circus and menagerie as we know them came into existence.

The first elephant to reach our shores was brought here by a sea captain in 1796. She was walked up and down the Atlantic Seaboard for about twenty-five years, being exhibited in farmer's barns or inn-yards. The second elephant arrived a few years later and was sold to Hachaliah Bailey, of Somers, Westchester County, New York. (James A. Bailey, of Barnum & Bailey, was not related to Hachaliah Bailey).

What sort of men were these founders of the American circus? Hachaliah Bailey was an inn-keeper and actively engaged in a stage coach line and Secretary of the Croton Turnpike Road Company. His monument in the Somers churchyard bears the inscription: "Enterprise, Perseverance, Integrity." Nathan Howes grew up on a farm. Aaron Turner was a shoe-maker. Barnum was a store-keeper and newspaper publisher. Among the men who carried on the business in later years were the Mabie brothers, of Patterson, New York, and Delavan, Wisconsin, who were farmers; Adam Forepaugh, who started his business career as a butcher and then got into the stage coach business in Philadelphia; the Sells Brothers, of Columbus, Ohio, who accumulated a little capital by truck-gardening and auctioneering; and the Ringling Brothers, of Baraboo, Wisconsin, who were sons of a harness-maker. By and large, the circus pioneers were representative, substantial American citizens.

The Circus "Down Under"

From Sid Baker, Paddington, N.S.W. Australia

(Editor's Note: I hope that the United States never gets to this point).

The people in the United States have no idea how starved Australia is for circuses and were it not for the picture production to stimulate circus interest I am sure that the circus as an entertainment would slowly but surely die.

Let us take Australia over the last 50 years. During that time we have had Fitzgeralds, St. Leons, Soles, Perrys, Wirths and now Bullens—Fitzgeralds died, St. Leons died, Soles faded, Perrys faded—Wirths are still going strong likewise Bullens. In other words there are only two circuses able to do big time in big cities.

And the irony of it is that Australia is in the throes of a big influx of migrants, none of which seem to know anything of circus. So it remains to be seen whether the circus in Australia will continue. My answer is yes, in a small way.

Circus Girl's Suicide Still Remembered

By HARRY E. CHRISMAN

(Reprinted from The Hutchinson News-Herald, Sunday, Feb. 19, 1956)

A grave of historical interest has a simple cement marker little known to anyone except the faithful people of Liberal who each year decorate it with flowers on Memorial Day.

It is the grave of May Jackson, circus equestrienne of the Al G. Barnes Wild Animal Show who, in 1915, took her own life over the love of her bandmaster sweetheart.

May Jackson was buried on a Sunday in October, 41 years ago, in the Liberal cemetery just two miles northwest of town. Old timers who witnessed the circus parade that attended May's burial still speak of the deep impression it left on them.

The story, as I have picked it up from Ray Millman, old-time newspaperman in Liberal, Martin Jonas, old timer who witnessed the funeral parade and others who were in Liberal at the time goes like this:

The circus had played Greensburg on Saturday, pulled down the big top and was enroute to Liberal that Saturday night. The show people were relaxed in the coaches or asleep in their bunks on the cars. In one coach a quarrel took place between the 16-year-old equestrienne, May Jackson and Eddie Woeckener, her bandmaster sweetheart. The young girl threatened to "do something" drastic but Woeckener scolded her for her emotionalism and kissed her good-night.

That was the last time he saw his sweetheart alive. For in the night May Jackson swallowed poison. A call boy found her body slumped in her berth the next morning.

At the police investigation the next morning a coroner's jury ruled death by suicide. And so Liberal witnessed its first and only, circus funeral.

The procession, that Sunday morning, led from the railroad yards to the Christian Church and from there to the cemetery. A plumed circus band led the way but without the bandmaster, Eddie Woeckener. It played, with muted notes, "Free As A Bird." May Jackson's chestnut gelding followed, saddled and bridled but riderless—with May's boots, reversed, tied into the stirrups. In the procession followed all of the circus folk—clowns without makeup, wild animals trainers, the jugglers, the fat lady, the thin man, and the midgets.

As the procession crossed the tracks and turned north up the main street six snow white horses, three on each side of the street, bowed low at a signal from their trainer as May's gelding passed before them. The deep pathos that filled the hearts of the spectators could be felt in the silence of the October morning. Even the circus animals seemed to walk with becoming dignity. At the rear of the procession the calliope sobbed out the notes of "Abide With Me."

In the church Eddie Woeckener listened disconsolately. As he passed by May's bier he fainted and fell across the casket. Later,

at the graveside he collapsed again. Mays horse was led from the grave as the men started filling it up. The circus then moved in a body, without music, back to the show grounds. The show must go on.

In the 41 years that have passed since May Jackson carried out her threat to destroy herself she has not been forgotten by her circus friends nor the people of Liberal. Each year her grave is decorated. Every few years a circus friend drops off a train or stops by on a motor trip and pays a visit to her grave.

Last year a graying newspaper editor in Liberal received a letter from an old circus musician who now resides in Peru, Ind. It read, in part:

"Dear Editor:

Will you please locate the floral shop which has been decorating May's grave each year and give them the enclosed money?" Have them plant six peony bulbs, three on each side of her grave, before or on Memorial Day.

I chose the peonies because I hope that they will grow and furnish blooms on Memorial Day during the coming years."

Loving hands will continue care for May's simple grave in the future as they have in the past. Already the daughter of a woman who saw May's funeral procession pass down the street makes the grave attractive twice each year. Mrs. Robert Miller, who decorates the grave of an old friend's husband, nearby, said of May's grave: "Yes, I always plan an extra bouquet for May's grave each year. We have ever since we learned May's story. We're not the only ones. We always find flowers there when we visit the grave, however early in the morning."

So here is one part of the vanishing frontiers that does not seem to disappear. The love and affection held by many of the people of Liberal for the circus girl who took her life for the love of her sweetheart.

Just Published

"THE TELESCOPING TABLEAUS" by Richard E. Conover
AN HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE BIG PARADE WAGONS
OF THE 1870's

16 pages—over 20 illustrations—price one dollar

RICHARD E. CONOVER

ROUTE 4, ZENIA, OHIO

From Our President

Dear Members:

I feel very humble and proud that for the fifth time you have chosen me as your president, and I can assure you that I will carry the Banner of "The Circus Historical Society" ever high.

I was very pleased also that I have William (Bill) Kasiska as vice-president, Bill is far more versed in the 'Roberts Rules and Regulations' than I am and I know that he will be of great assistance to me.

And the team of Bob and Agnes King cannot be beat and with wheel horses like them we can hold C.H.S. in the road.

We are gaining news members and we have a substantial balance in the treasury, Bob is working on a new roster that will soon be ready.

I am looking forward to greeting you all at the Convention in Peru, Ind., Aug. 10-11-12, at that time of year the circuses that are playing in the northern states start to drop south so we will no doubt be able to contact one either in or near Peru, but even if we do not have a circus, there is plenty to see and do in that circus city.

So once more my THANKS to all of you and may there only be dry lots and plenty of Circuses for all.

Sincerely,

BETTE LEONARD

Glen Tracy, 73, of Sarasota, Florida, artist of the circus and member of the Circus Historical Society, passed away suddenly while visiting in St. Petersburg, Fla., April 4.

Born in Hudson, Michigan, Jan. 24, 1883, he attended the Ada Military College and the Cincinnati Art Academy. He was a teacher at the Art Academy for many years.

Although he spent the greater part of his life in and near Cincinnati, Mr. Tracy and his wife, Mimi, had made their home in Sarasota, Florida, during the past few years.

Glen was a fine artist and was known throughout the world for his fine paintings of the circus. He painted all subjects, was very good at portraits, and during the past fifteen years had concentrated in painting circus people and subjects. He deeply loved the beauty and color and action of the circus.

He is survived by the widow, Mimi. Funeral services were conducted April 6 in Sarasota, Florida.

POLACK BROTHERS

EIGHTH ANNUAL 1956 SHRINE CIRCUS

PROGRAM

★

"Fiesta In Mexico"

Featuring Lovely La Norma and Gene Randow

★

Astonishments of Aerial Audacity

La Norma—Aerial Artistry on the single trapeze.

The Rhodins—Combined balancing and trapeze on revolving ladder.

The Coronas—World renowned high wire exponents giving an exhibition of thrills and daring unequalled in circusdom.

Aerial Ballet—Beautiful Costumed Girls.

The Flying Thrillers—In massed mid-air precision.

★

Achievements of Acrobatic Agility

The Georges—Trampoline.

The Tommies—Rolly Poly.

The Emanuels—Hand to Hand, Head to Head Balancing.

The Del Morals—Balancing Perch Held and Balanced on Forehead.

The Symphonettes—Six Girls Tumbling—Acrobatics—Balancing.

The Ibarra Brothers—Young Men From Mexico Performing Unbelievable Feats on the Horizontal Bars.

★

Attainments of Animal Ability

Baudy's Greyhounds (10 Greyhounds, 4 Monkeys)—Unusual tricks and stunts.

Costines Chimps (3 Chimps and Collie Dog)—Riding, Hand Balancing, Stilt Walking, Chimps on Trapeze.

George Hanneford Family—"The Greatest Riding Act in the Circus World."

Polack Bros. Circus Elephants—Famous Elephants from cinema stardom presented by Pinky and June Madison.

Amusements of Antic Activity

Gene Randow and His Clown Cohorts—Comedy Caprices contributed preceding the performance and at intervals during the program.

★

Clown Alley

Gene Randow, Producing Clown; Al Ackerman, Larry Benner, John Cirillino, Al Florenz, Paul Kaye, and Ray Sinclair.

★

Polack Bros. Circus Band

Henry Kyes, Bandmaster
Rex Ronstrom, Percussionist Kitty Ronstrom, Organist

The Polack Brothers Circus, as produced by Bessie E. Polack and Louis Stern, with Sam T. Polack as business manager and Richard Slayton as equestrian director and announcer, made its eighth annual appearance in Roanoke, Virginia, February 23rd, 24th and 25th.

While the displays would rate an excellent average all through the program, among the outstanding events I would list the beautiful and scintillating La Norma, a princess of the single trapeze; the Coronas with the unicycle, bicycle and motorcycle on the high wire, a unit very near perfection; the Symphonettes, six lovely looking young ladies in their acrobatics of balancing and tumbling; the Flying Thrillers, just what their name implies; and the Rhodins, combined balancing and trapeze on revolving ladder.

An old time circusy touch was added this year by the George Haneford Family riding act with four beautiful horses and a special sense of showmanship among the members of the family participating.

And then, the Polack Bros. Circus Elephants, "Sally," "Queenie," and "Happy," the three ladies formerly with the Metro-Goldwyn Studios, and once owned and billed as "Frank Whitbeck's Three Girls From Hollywood." (See Reader's Digest, July, 1950, pages 128-130). This was their third visit with Polack's and they have never failed to please the crowds.

—A. Robert Hall.

The Circus Historical Society extends Birthday Greetings to Captain Elmer Jones of North Warren, Pennsylvania, whose birthday was March 24th.

We extend congratulations to Rudy Rudynoff, Jr., and Miss Beverly Lang on the occasion of their engagement. Miss Lang is of the Lang troupe of acrobats who were once with the King of Two Car Circus.

We are sorry to hear that Ed "Tap Tap" Gollmar is ill. He is in the Ringling St. Mary's Hospital in Baraboo. Please write to him—he will appreciate it a lot.

More About Elephants Born In Baraboo

From a fellow circus fan in Maitland, Florida, William Kasiska of this city has received an interesting clipping, probably from the New York World of 1900. The article is captioned "First American Elephant" and it starts out, "Can elephants be bred and reared in the United States?"

The article goes on to say:

"The answers by keepers of zoological gardens and by circus men in the past has been a universal no. Pearl Sonders, boss keeper of the 25 elephants in the Ringling Bros. menagerie at Baraboo, Wis., however, took a different view. He studied the elephant and its habits, and the result is a new industry with which America promises to beat the world.

"The announcement a few days ago that an elephant had been born in the Ringling menagerie created a sensation among exhibitors and owners of wild animals all over the country. This baby elephant, it is said, is the first true blue American pachyderm. It has been alleged that one or two specimens have been born on this side of the Atlantic, and in each case the cow elephant had been imported only a few weeks before.

"Alice, the mother of the new and native American elephant, has been in the Ringling Bros. menagerie for six years. She was imported from India when only a few years old. Baldy, the father, is the heaviest pachyderm in the country. He was imported by Burr Robbins.

"The baby was given the name of Nick. He weighed at birth 200 pounds. His trunk was 12 inches long and his tail measured 22 inches. The height of Nick is 34 inches and unlike the older elephants, Nick is covered with a thick, curly growth of black hair which gives him a wooly appearance. When born, the young elephant was unable to stand, but in a few hours had gained sufficient strength to walk about and hunt for food.

CRASH!!

THE 1956 CONVENTION OF THE C.H.S

WILL BE HELD IN PERU, INDIANA

AUGUST 10, 11, 12

PLAN NOW! — BE THERE!
